

Upper Necaxa Totonac

Upper Necaxa Totonac is a native American language of central Mexico spoken by 3,400 people^[4] in and around four villages—Chicontla, Patla, Cacahuatlán, and San Pedro Tlaloantongo—in the Necaxa River Valley in Northern Puebla State.^[5] Although speakers represent the majority of the adult population in Patla and Cacahuatlán, there are very few monolinguals and few if any children are currently learning the language as a mother tongue,^[6] and, as a consequence, the language must be considered severely endangered.

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Upper Necaxa Totonac	
Native to	Mexico
Region	Puebla
Ethnicity	5,800 live in houses headed by speakers (2000) ^[1]
Native speakers	3,400 (2000) ^[2]
Language family	Totozoquean ? <div> <div>▪ Totonacan</div> <div>▪ Totonac</div> <div>▪ Central</div> <div>▪ Northern</div> <div>▪ Upper Necaxa Totonac</div> </div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	tku
Glottolog	uppe1275 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/uppe1275) ^[3]

Phonology

In some respects, Upper Necaxa has a fairly typical Totonacan consonantal inventory, lacking a voice/voiceless opposition in stops and having the three lateral phonemes /l/, /ɭ/, and /tɭ/, although the lateral affricate /tɭ/ has largely been replaced by the voiceless lateral fricative /ɭ/, persisting in word-final position in only a few lexical items.^[7]

aspects (imperfective, perfective, and perfect) are marked by suffixes. The fourth aspect, the progressive, is realized through the use of inflectional compounds formed on the stative verb *ma : ɬ* ‘be lying’.^[10] The indicative mood is zero-marked while the optative and potential are marked by the prefixes *ka-* and *tɬ-*, respectively; the fourth mood, the irrealis, is marked by idiomatic combinations of morphemes borrowed from other parts of the TAM paradigms.^[11] Stative verbs are marked for tense and mood, but lack aspectual inflections.

Person-marking on the verb is complex, the verb agreeing in person and number with the subject and up to two objects. The table below shows the indicative perfective form of the transitive verb *tuks-* ‘hit sth’.^[5]

	1sg.obj	2sg.obj	3sg.obj	1pl.obj	2pl.obj	3pl.obj
1sg.sub	—	ɬktuksnɪ	ɬktukslɪ	—	ɬka : tuksnɪ	ɬka : tukslɪ
2sg.sub	kintuɬkstɪ	—	tuɬkstɪ	kila : tuɬswɪ	—	ka : tuɬkstɪ
3sg.su	kintuɬkslɪ	tuksnɪ	tukslɪ	kinka : tuksnɪ	ka : tuksnɪ	ka : tukslɪ
1pl _{exc.} .sub	—	ɬka : tuksnɪ	ɬktuɬswɪ	—	ɬka : tuksnɪ	ɬka : tuɬswɪ
1pl _{incl.} .sub	—	—	tuɬswɪ	—	—	ka : tuɬswɪ
2pl.sub	kila : tuɬswɪ	—	tuɬkstit	kila : tuɬswɪ	—	ka : tuɬkstit
3pl.sub	kintatuɬkslɪ	tatuksnɪ	tatukslɪ	kinka : tatuksnɪ	ka : tatuksnɪ	tatuksnɪ/ka : tukslɪ

Like other members of the family, the Upper Necaxa verb paradigms show some irregularities in forms where first and second persons interact and one or both of these persons is plural, leading to a three-way ambiguity in such expressions:^[11]

ɬka : tuksnɪ

kila : tuɬswɪ

ɬk-ka : -tuks-n-lɪ

kin-la : -tuks-w-lɪ

1sg.sub-pl.obj-hit-2obj-pfv

1obj-reciprocal-hit-1pl.sub-pfv

‘I hit you guys’

‘you_{sg} hit us’

‘we hit you_{sg}

‘you guys hit me’

‘we hit you guys’

‘you guys hit us’

A further wrinkle is that in clauses with third person plural subjects and third person plural objects, only one of these can be marked on the verb (see the bottom right cell in the paradigm given above).

Double object-marking is rare, and occurs only in clauses with both a singular first-person and a singular second person object:

kinta : tɔ kimaɬki : n

kin-ta : tɔ

kin-maɬki : -n

my-father

1obj-give-2obj

‘my father gave me to you (in marriage)’

Such a sentence where either the recipient or the theme (the bride in this case) were plural would have to be expressed by periphrastic means.

Verbal quasi-inflection

In addition to its rich verbal inflectional system, Upper Necaxa also has a number of affixes that, like inflections, are close to 100% productive across the class of verbs, are semantically compositional, and do not form new lexemes with their bases, but which do not express obligatory categories. These fall under the heading of “quasi-inflection.”^[12] The quasi-inflectional morphemes include elements with modal meanings such as the desiderative suffix *-kʉtun* and the debiditive *-ʔeː*, directionals such as *kiː*- ‘roundtrip’, *teː*- ‘in passing’, and *-teːʔa* ‘ambulative’, deictics (*-či* ‘proximal’ and *-ča* ‘distal’), *-pala* ‘repetitive’, and the totalitative *-ʔoː*, which indicates either that an action has been carried through to completion or that the subject or objects have been completely affected.

Valency-increasing derivation

Upper Necaxa has a wealth of valency-increasing morphemes, both causatives and applicatives, which can be combined more or less freely with verb roots and with each other to form multivalent verbs with up to five objects.^[13] There are two causatives, the less productive being *məʔa*- ‘stimulus’, which adds a non-agentive or inanimate causer of an involuntary change of state. The second, more productive, causative is the circumfix *maː*- *-niː*. This morpheme is a canonical causative that adds an agentive causer to an event and is compatible with almost any verb in the language. The suffixal portion of the circumfix is either *-niː* or takes the form of a long harmonic vowel agreeing in quality with the vowel of the preceding syllable. Only dynamic verbs require the suffix, stative verbs forming their causatives with *maː*- alone.

In addition to the causatives, there are four applicatives, each associated with a particular semantic role or roles. The most general of these is the benefactive *-ni* which adds semantic roles such as beneficiary, recipient, addressee, and affectee. The instrumental prefix *liː*- adds either an instrument or a motive to a clause, and is used to mark the subordination of a following finite clause in expressions of motive:

liː ʔeʔlatəʔlakamimaː ʔ kisʔatə ʔkilhniː ʔ
liː-ʔeʔlatəʔ-laka-min-maː ʔ kin-sʔatə ʔk-kilhniː-ʔ
 inst-stick.out.tongue-face-come-prog 1po-child 1sg.sub-scold-pfv
 ‘my child is sticking her tongue out this way because I scolded her’

The third prefix, the comitative *təː*- adds a co-actor to the clause, while the fourth, *ləʔ*- ‘allative’, adds a goal, usually but not always human. The allative is found only with verbs of motion historically or synchronically derived from the verbs *ən* ‘go’ and *min* ‘come’.

Derivation using bodyparts

A well-known characteristic of Totonacan languages in general is their prolific use of prefixal forms of bodyparts and other part-expressions to form verbs specifying a target or “active” zone for the action designated by the verb.^{[14][15]} The part prefixes can be combined either with a (free or bound) stative base, as in (1), or with an ordinary dynamic verb (2):

(1) *ʔeʔkutu wəː ʔ*
ʔeʔ-kutu wəː ʔ
 mouth-come.up.out tamales
 ‘the tamales are overflowing the mouth (of the pot)’

(2) *čəːʔtykuː kiwi čəːkaːn*
čəː-ʔtyku kiwi čəːkaːn

shin–perforate tree woodpecker
‘the woodpecker makes holes in the trunk of the tree’

In neither case does the addition of the part prefix affect the valency of the verb, positively or negatively. Although there are a few individual lexical items where the addition of a part prefix can increase the valency (usually by adding an instrument), the only constructions where this is regularly the case are "wearing" verbs formed from the bound stative bases *-nu* : ‘in’ and *-ftu* ‘out’ such as *makanu* : ‘wear sth (clothing) on the hand (*maka-*)’/*makaftu* ‘remove sth (clothing) from the hand (*maka-*)’, *ǝʔnu* : ‘wear sth (clothing) on the head (*ǝʔ-*)’/*ǝʔftu* ‘remove sth (clothing) from the head (*ǝʔ-*)’, etc.

Nominal morphology

Unlike verbs, nouns in Upper Necaxa are uninflected.^[5] Although they have plural forms, these are rarely used and the language completely lacks case or any kind of noun class or gender. Possessive constructions are head-marked, the possessed nouns bearing a prefix showing the person of the possor and a suffix indicating its number:

	sg	pl
1	kinčiči ‘my dog’	kinčičikān ‘our dog’
2	minčiči ‘your dog’	minčičikān ‘your dog’
3	iʃčiči ‘his/her dog’	iʃčičikān ‘their dog’

Kinship terms and words referring to parts of wholes are inherently possessed and must always be inflected for person and number of their possessor, though they may be used generically with the prefix *ʃa-* ‘impersonal possessor’.

Syntax

Upper Necaxa is a basically verb-initial, head-marking language with constituent order governed largely by information structure. Grammatical relations are marked exclusively by verbal agreement, the language lacking any case or prepositions,^[5] and verbs can have up to five objects. Unlike many languages where different object-relations are assigned by the government pattern of the verb and are assigned uniquely, in Upper Necaxa nominal arguments are largely undifferentiated and the choice of the controller of object-agreement morphology is governed by animacy and discourse-factors.^[16]

Locative constructions

The “basic locative construction” (that is, the full answer to the question ‘where is X?’) in Upper Necaxa is unusually complex and contains elements expressing both the posture of the object whose location is being described (the Figure) and its intrinsic orientation with respect to another object that is used to locate it (the Ground):^[17]

pǝʔɪnu	ǝkpu:wakāɪ	sipex
pǝʔɪnu	ǝkpu:–wakāɪ	sipex
cloud	crown–be.high	hill

‘the cloud (Figure) is above the hill (Ground)’

lame : tax ǵkpu : ya : ɬ me : sa

lame : tax ǵkpu : -ya : ɬ me : sa

bottle crown-stand table

‘the bottle (Figure) stand on the table (Ground)’

The basic formula for these expressions is [Figure part.prefix+posture.verb Ground], where the posture verb describes the position (sitting, standing, lying, or up high) of the Figure and the part prefix specifies its intrinsic orientation with respect to the Ground. The order of lexical elements is flexible and the Figure may be omitted, and in some cases the Ground may be affixed with the locative clitic *nak=*. Preliminary data on acquisition indicate that children do not fully master this construction until they are 10 or 11 years of age.^[18]

Another interesting feature of these constructions is that, where such a reading is plausible, the mapping between Figure/Ground and grammatical relation is potentially reversible:

ɪkpeʃtuwakǵn

ɪk-peʃtu-wakǵ-n

1sg.sub-shoulder-be.high-2obj

‘I (Figure) am on your (Ground) shoulders’

‘you (Figure) are on my (Ground) shoulders’

kimpeʃtuwákǵ

kin-peʃtu-wákǵ

1obj-shoulder-be.high:2sg.sub

‘you (Figure) are on my (Ground) shoulders’

‘I (Figure) am on your (Ground) shoulders’

Although the two sentence above differ as to whether the first-person or subject-persons is subject or object (and vice versa) each has the same potential interpretations, the resolution of the ambiguity depending crucially on context.

Numerals and numeral classifiers

Numerals below twenty are bound morphemes and must always be accompanied by a classificatory prefix indicating the type or measure of the noun being quantified. The use of a classificatory prefix, as opposed to a suffix, is typologically unusual.^[19] In all there are just over 30 classificatory prefixes,^[5] a few of which are illustrated below:

čǵ : tin čǵɪʃku

‘one man’

laʔatin pǵɪʃni

‘one pig’

ʔentin kiwi

‘one stick’

pa : tin ɬǵmam

‘one pot’

čǵ : tu čǵɪʃku

‘two men’

tantu pǵɪʃni

‘two pigs’

ʔentu kiwi

‘two sticks’

pa : tu ɬǵmam

‘two pots’

ʔeɬatutun čǵɪʃku

‘three men’

tantutun pǵɪʃni

‘three pigs’

ʔentutun kiwi

‘three sticks’

pa : tutun ɬǵmam

‘three pots’

ʔeɬata : ti čǵɪʃku

‘four men’

tantǵ : ti pǵɪʃni

‘four pigs’

ʔenta : ti kiwi

‘four sticks’

pa : tǵ : ti ɬǵmam

‘four pots’

ʔeɬakitsis čǵɪʃku

‘five men’

tankitsis pǵɪʃni

‘five pigs’

ʔenkitsis kiwi

‘five sticks’

pa : kitsis ɬǵmam

‘five pots’

ʔeɬača : ʃan čǵɪʃku

‘six men’

tanča : ʃan pǵɪʃni

‘six pigs’

ʔenča : ʃan kiwi

‘six sticks’

pa : ča : ʃan ɬǵmam

‘six pots’

ʔeɬatoxon čǵɪʃku

‘seven men’

tantoxon pǵɪʃni

‘seven pigs’

ʔentoxon kiwi

‘seven sticks’

pa : toxon ɬǵmam

‘seven pots’

ʔeɬatsayan čǵɪʃku

‘eight men’

tantsayan pǵɪʃni

‘eight pigs’

ʔentsayan kiwi

‘eight sticks’

pa : tsayan ɬǵmam

‘eight pots’

'eight men'	'eight pigs'	'eight sticks'	'eight pots'
ʔeɬanaxaː tsa ɕi fku	tanaxaː tsa pə fni	ʔenaxaː tsa ki wi	paː naxaː tsa ɬamam
'nine men'	'nine pigs'	'nine sticks'	'nine pots'
ʔeɬakam ɕi fku	tankam pə fni	ʔenkam ki wi	paː kam ɬamam
'ten men'	'ten pigs'	'ten sticks'	'ten pots'

Note that the classifier for humans (first column) changes from ɕəː- to ʔeɬa- after 3 (although ɕəː- is occasionally used for 3 people); the classifier for one animal is ɬəʔa- and for more than one animal is *tan* (column 2). Numbers between 10 and 20 are formed by combining the numeral bases for 1–9 with the base for 10, *-kam*: ʔeɬakamtin '11 (people)', ʔeɬakamtɥ 'eleven (people)', etc.

Numbers higher than 20 are used without classificatory prefixes by many speakers. Like many Mesoamerican languages, Upper Necaxa uses a vigesimal numbering system based on multiples of *puɬam* '20', the odd decades being formed by adding *kam* '10':

20 puɬam	30 puɬamakam
40 tɥpuɬam	50 tɥpuɬamakam
60 tɥtɥpuɬam	70 tɥtɥpuɬamakam
80 tɔː tɥpuɬam	90 tɔː tɥpuɬamakam

As the 11–19, numerals between decades are formed by simple compounding: *puɬamatin* '21', *puɬamakaɬtin* '31', etc. Numbers from 100 up are generally in Spanish.

Notes

1. "ISO change request" (http://www-01.sil.org/iso639-3/cr_files/2006-085_tku.pdf) (PDF). *01.sil.org*. Retrieved 31 May 2018.
2. Upper Necaxa Totonac (<https://www.ethnologue.com/19/language/tku/>) at *Ethnologue* (19th ed., 2016)
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Upper Necaxa Totonac" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/uppe1275>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. 2005 INEGI Census
5. Beck (2011a)
6. Lam (2009)
7. Beck (2004)
8. Beck (2006a)
9. Beck (2008b)
10. Beck (2011b)
11. Beck & Mel'čuk (2011)
12. Mel'čuk 2006
13. Beck (2004, 2011a)
14. Levy 1999
15. Langacker 1987
16. Beck (2006b)
17. Cf. Pederson, et al. (1998)
18. Varela & Klint (2006)

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External links

- Upper Necaxa Totonac Project (<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~totonaco/>)

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